

#1 Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

Our school has implemented many different approaches to address the issue of school safety. The keystone of our efforts is the “Living in Peace...Learning in Peace” program, which is a school-wide peacemaking initiative now in its fourth year of implementation. The program was started to continue to nurture the already positive and safe school environment we had here and serves as the organizing umbrella for a number of anti-violence efforts.

Our mission has always been to provide the opportunity to achieve academic success in a positive school environment. In order to support our school’s already positive environment this proactive program was established in 1998-1999. Phase Two, “*Peacemaking 2000*”, continued to promote the safety of our school by stressing that “keeping the peace is everyone’s responsibility”. Year three of the *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* program incorporated the in-depth use of the Win/Win Guidelines throughout the entire school and focused on parent and community involvement. Year four, the 2001-2002 school year, focuses on “Building Peace”, as we are involved in major renovations and construction additions to our physical school. Monthly themes highlight our need to work responsibly as individuals, respectfully with others and cohesively as a school. The students selected these years’ monthly themes during our advisor/advisee program known as CHATT.

Project Objectives

1. To develop pro-social skills such as positive communication, problem solving and decision-making.
2. To attain a high level of interest in, identification with, acceptance of, and participation in the various monthly and daily activities related to school safety.
3. To encourage the students to model behaviors consistent with a peacemaker (such as respect, teamwork, cooperation and responsibility).
4. To develop a sense of community in our schools and in the greater community as well. To develop a sense of “fitting in” and belonging
5. To strive to maintain an atmosphere of trust and respect among students and staff
6. To have students feel safe and free emotionally so that they can learn

Our program has ten basic component parts. They are:

1. Bimonthly advisor/advisee program known as CHATT- Children Having Adults to Talk To.
2. An after school Peacemakers Club of approx. 60 students
3. Our own Peace Web Site
4. A staff Peacemaking committee which meets monthly
5. Safety features in place in the school exists such as id’s for all, use of walkie talkies for administrators and counselors and other personnel (nurses, office staff, teacher assistant/security guard etc.) Use of video cameras in hallways and on buses. Staff monitoring of hallways and bus duty.
6. Parent and Community support and involvement
7. A Peace Pals program linking 5th graders with our 7th graders (in the first three years of the program)
8. Curriculum Integration including developmental guidance lessons.
9. Building and Team Activities (Classroom displays, Peace Days, Family nights, PeaceWalks, Motivational Speakers, Assemblies etc.)
10. Peer Mediation Program

#2 List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

The following Core Curriculum Content Standards were addressed in activities presented by the *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* program in the following ways;

Visual and Performing Arts – Standard 1.6 – Develop design skills – Our participants create a variety of posters to advertise the positive affects of being peaceful in and out of school.

Comprehensive Health and Physical Education – Standard 2.2 – Personal, interpersonal, and life skills – Our participants participate in bi-monthly meetings and developmental guidance lessons in which personal, interpersonal, and life skills are taught.

Language Arts Literacy – Standard 3.1 – Speak for a variety of purposes and audiences – Our trained participants speak to peers and faculty members when they attend bi-monthly CHATT groups. They also speak to adults during various public presentations. **Standard 3.2 – Active-listening** – Our participants practice active listening at bi-weekly group discussions and are trained in active listening through mirroring activities such as, “What I hear you saying is...”

Standard 3.4 – Read material with comprehension and critical analysis – Our participants consistently read and analyze various age-specific social scenarios in CHATT and developmental guidance lessons.

Science – Standard 5.2 and Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standard #3 – All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem solving. Our participants are consistently trained in these skill areas through BI-weekly CHATT activities and classroom lessons provided by the guidance department. –.

Cross Content Workplace Readiness #2 – All students will use technology, information, and other tools. Our students developed Peacemaking Stacks during their hyper-studio unit in the required computer course. Our Peacemakers Club’s technology sub-committee created school-wide newsletters that were mailed in each report card.

Cross Content Workplace Readiness #4 and #5 – 4. All students will demonstrate self-management skills.

5. All Students will apply safety principles. The Peer Mediators are trained in a 7-step conflict resolution process. They have received a 3-day training and are now assigned to the guidance office on a rotating basis to do peer mediations. The steps to the Win Win Guidelines have been taught to all our students as means of Conflict Resolution/Problem Solving during Chatt. Students sign a behavior code policy stating that they are aware of the consequences of infractions and agree to abide by school rules.

#3 Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

Middle school years are often turbulent times filled with joy and happiness for some, stress, and sadness for others, and oftentimes a mixture of many conflicting feelings all at once for most.

Developmentally, students are seeking to fit in, to be included, and to have a sense of belonging. Peer approval and acceptance are vitally important to the adolescent; they also desire a relationship with their teachers and, inwardly, seek their approval as well.

Many adults have stories of being teased; humiliated, harassed, left out, ridiculed, and negatively labeled during middle school. These emotional scars stay with people until they are appropriately dealt with.

With its many components, *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* is designed to teach pro-social skills so that it will be acceptable, even *cool*, to be kind, complimentary, respectful, and able to express one’s feelings in honest, non-aggressive manner.

A major goal of our program was acceptance of, participation in, and continued growth of the *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* program. One means of assessment was a five-point, anecdotal survey that was (and will again) distributed to and completed by our middle school staff members. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and supported the effectiveness of the school-wide program. Staff began to notice and recognize higher-level, positive social behaviors throughout the 900 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade student body as a whole.

Through CHATT survey evaluations both students and staff responded positively to the program's effectiveness in reference to self-esteem and the ability to express one's self to others in their age group as well as to adult staff and faculty members.

Another effective way we used to measure the extent of participation was noting that on peace days approximately 90% of our entire school population wore their red peace tee shirt. Other visible means of participation included monthly theme posters being placed in each classroom to become the focus of each month's discussion.

As a direct result of this program, we have seen an increase in students requesting alternate means of resolving conflicts. They made use of our peer mediation program and readily sought out counselors so that they could utilize the win-win guidelines with others with whom they were experiencing difficulties. During CHATT, developmental guidance lessons in group and individual sessions the students were able to express themselves using "I messages" and were able to identify and address their feelings in a positive manner.

In addition, they were able to utilize a decision making model and were able to describe the pro's and con's of the consequences of various courses of action and in most cases were able to make wise choices as noted by their counselors and themselves.

Developing a sense of community was an integral piece of our program. Not only did our students highlight our whole message of peace within our building but they took the message out into the greater community as well.

For example our Peace Pals performed a talent show at a local nursing home in 1999 and 2000. Our Peacemakers Club sold thank you grams and Care grams in 1998, 1999, and 2000 raising funds that were donated to the American Cancer Society (\$110.00 in the year 2000) and other charitable organizations.

At our Peacewalk in April, 2000 approximately 100 students and family members participated in the day long festivities (even in the rain). In 2001 approximately 160 attended and 180 attended our first ever Family night in which we had a guest speaker from the Council on Domestic Violence and had demonstrations of a Chatt session, the use of the win/win guidelines and a peer mediation session.

In 1998-1999 twenty-five students were active in our Peacemakers Club. In 1999-2000, *three hundred* showed up on our first meeting day. Last year approximately 50 attended and this year we have 60 currently actively participating. These students represent grades 6,7 and 8.

Our *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* slogan is on virtually every piece of stationery, report card, newsletter, on hallway poster, banners, peace quilt, so that this slogan has become not only a slogan but a way of life. Student state that they feel safe here, even with all that is going on in the world and in society at large.

#4 Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school district.

It has been our joy to share our program with many other schools in the state and most recently at the National Middle School Association Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. Our procedure is to share and review step by step a packet of information which contains our mission statement, goals, an umbrella which shows all ten of our component parts, sample calendars which we have used outlining our monthly themes and activities. We even have the highly developed Peace Pals project in booklet form.

During the presentation (with or without power point) we discuss the genesis of the *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* program from the idea stage to how it has evolved to the program that it is today. We discuss summer planning, ongoing staff, and student involvement in the decision making process, family and community involvement and funding issues. Issues of administrative support are also addressed.

Every aspect of the *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace* program has been kept in notebooks for each year. Yearly photograph books have also been catalogued noting our activities. Video clips and newspaper articles help chronicle our way of living and learning. We gladly share these with other schools as a way of enhancing other school climates. Every school has situation unique to them. We are most willing to answer any question that other districts or schools may have. We stand ready to applaud and encourage them as they tailor a program that suits their needs.

We believe that with these extensive packets of information and a two-hour presentation/workshop any school that is sincerely interested would be able to have enough information to begin the journey towards *Living in Peace...Learning in Peace*.